TRANSCRIPT—PAUL RIFKIN

Interviewee: Paul Rifkin

Interviewer: Pat Fitzpatrick

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Pat Fitzpatrick: I am meeting this morning at the community room of the North Asheville Library with Paul Rifkin to discuss what he knows about North Asheville. Were you born and raised here in North Asheville?

Paul Rifkin: I was.

PF: What area were your parents living when you were born?

PR: First we lived at the rock house on Kimberly, like a five-way stop sign. I don't remember much about that. I probably moved when I was about three or four years old. We moved out to Beaver Lake and for the rest of my life, or the rest of my young life, I lived at 34 Marlborough Road, which is off of Midland Drive.

PF: So you lived there until you went out on your own as an adult?

PR: Yes, I did. I lived there for many, many years. So it was my sister and I, we lived in, it was kind of a large Colonial house with two white columns in the front. It was a

beautiful house. It's still there. Dave Gray and his wife live there now. We had a lot of fun. It had a big backyard, wonderful swing set, wonderful parents. I had a good childhood there. Stayed there until I went off to college.

PF: What do you remember about Asheville? What are your earliest memories of-- When I say Asheville, north Asheville, where you grew up, this area, Merrimon, the activities you did. Or is that too broad?

PR: Well, I can bring it--I can reel it in a little bit. I don't remember too much of my early years. But I remember going to school, to grammar school, over at the corner of Ottari and Kimberly Avenue. I went to a school called Grace Elementary School. And it was a wonderful experience. I remember the lunches they had there. They were so good. Ira B. Jones was the principal at that time. That school has been torn down and rebuilt. It's not at the exact same place that it was originally, but still on the same property. The school is named Ira B. Jones now. One thing I particularly remember, that I think is kind of funny now, is we were getting a lot of the kids from the Beaverdam area at the school. And many of those kids were from homes that, they had a tough go of it. They were kids that, whose parents had come out of the depression. And I can remember some of the kids even coming to school and they were barefooted. And one particular thing that sticks with me is I remember the teacher telling one of the unruly children he was going to have to stay after school, and if you stayed after school you didn't have to stay very long. And he said, "I can't stay after school today." And she said, "Why not?" And he said, "I've got to get a haircut." And she said, "Well, I'm not going to keep you that long. You can get a haircut after you leave school." He said, "No, I've got to go to Biltmore and get a haircut." And she said, "Well, why do you have to go all the way to Biltmore to get a

haircut?" And he said, "Because here they charge 50 cents and in Biltmore they only charge a quarter for a haircut." That's something I remember that I thought was kind of interesting.

PF: Yeah. Your first glimpse of a world outside of where you lived.

PR: Yeah. We kind of lived in a protected area where everybody was kind of milk and honey.

PF: One thing that they want to keep track of, when possible, for another program, did you have a maid?

PR: We did. We had a maid. Her name was Lavada.

PF: Can you spell that?

PR: I'll do my best. L-a-v-a-d-a. And she worked for Mom and Dad many, many years. And we had a basement and when she stayed, there was a room in the basement with a bathroom. And I just remember her working for us, and I may be trying to construct things that didn't exist, but it seems to me that she always wore a uniform, too. But I'm not sure. I might be making it up, but to the best of my knowledge, she wore a uniform.

PF: Was she a Black lady?

PR: She was a Black lady.

PF: Do you know her last name?

PR: I do not.

PF: Or where she lived? What part of the city?

PR: I don't. I don't remember her having a car nor do I remember Mother or Dad going to pick her up, so it's possible that she rode the bus, which was up the hill on Midland Drive. But that seems to be the only way she would have come to the house.

PF: What kind of activities did you do as a child when you went out--or did you have freedom to just go out and run with--.

PR: Oh, yeah. We could go out in the morning and come home in the evening. There was no threat to our safety. The kids in the neighborhood, we would play outside. We would just kind of mess around like all kids do. There was a little stream on Avon and we'd go hang around then. We had a big backyard so we would just play ballgames, that sort of thing, when we were young. Now I can ride through the old neighborhood and as I go along I could look at the left and right and tell you who lived there, which house. I pretty much knew all the kids that lived in the neighborhood. I guess that's not abnormal for people growing up prior to people getting squirrely about what is happening in and around their neighborhood.

PF: Did you have other relatives in the area, other than your parents and your siblings?

PR: I did. My grandfather and grandmother lived up Marlborough Road closer to Midland Drive than we did. My grandfather was a particularly funny person. He had a furniture store called Pearlman's. And that store was very prominent for many, many years. And he was just a real kind gentleman. My grandmother was stern and made sure that he did things the way they needed to be done in the furniture store or else he'd have

run it into the ground. One of the funny things he did, he went to--apparently he went to Central or South America one time. He came back and he brought two monkeys and he had the monkeys in a big crate then, back of the furniture store. And the people would come in and try to engage the monkeys. They were so mean, and the monkeys would spit at them, throw things at them. I was surprised he didn't get arrested for that.

PF: How long did he have them?

PR: He had them for a while. He had those monkeys for a while. And he would do things, like if somebody bought a bedroom set, he would throw in lamps and my grandmother would get so mad at him. He'd give away free furniture.

PF: Their names were Pearlman?

PR: Pearlman.

PF: Where was the store located, the first one?

PR: The store was across the street from Malaprops. It was a huge furniture store. And later, after my grandparents died, my cousin Skip took the business and built the building out on Tunnel Road.

PF: That was there when we came.

PR: Am I talking too much?

PF: No, that's what we're here for, actually, that's what we're here for. [Both laughing.] Now when did you start becoming aware of a bigger world, like out on Merrimon and the

stores and go shopping? Did you go places with your parents like that, or you stayed home until a certain age?

PR: No, I think it's a little bit like watching a clock, watching a minute hand on a clock. You know it moves but you really don't see it, so to me it seemed so gradual that I didn't notice that things were changing like you do now when you see businesses.

PF: Well, what do you remember of then? Because that's what we're after here. Anything that you can remember of North Asheville that pops into your mind? I mean, at this point we can be random. We don't have to go chronologically here.

PR: Well, I think pretty much my world revolved around where I lived. I can remember Mother and Dad and I driving to an apple orchard which was on, I think it was on Webb Cove Road, which is out in Beaverdam. It's not there anymore but the apple trees are. And it just seemed like it was an all-day trip, to go that far. And then on Sundays we would go to a relative's house in Hendersonville. And it seemed to take forever to go out that two-lane road to get to Hendersonville. And we would have big--not parties, but dinners over there, just the whole family would come and it was just a lot of fun. One of the early things I remember about Beaver Lake and North Asheville is where I'd love to go is Lord's Drug Store. And Lord's Drug Store is located now where Avenue M is. And we'd go in there.

PF: Where was it when you went to it?

PR: It was right there where Avenue M is.

PF: And I remember getting cherry coke. That's where they would pump the syrup in the cokes and they had a magazine rack. That was a nice experience going to Lord's Drug Store. I mean, I can remember going to other stores that are no longer there downtown, but we don't need to get into that.

PF: What else along Merrimon or Charlotte Street, even. Was Charlotte Street in your world?

PR: Yeah, Charlotte Street has been there forever. I certainly remember the Manor. Charlotte Street, I can remember a park at the end of Charlotte Street which is still there. I liked playing over there. That was before my grandparents moved to North Asheville. There was a wonderful park over there. Speaking of parks, as you turn up to Midland Drive, on the left there's a grassy area, more like a flattened out triangle, and we used to play football over there. Bunch of kids. That was one of the things I always enjoyed doing. I just remembered that park. Are you familiar with where I'm talking about?

PF: Is it kind of next to Beaver Lake but down kind of between that and the next spot?

PR: It's across the street from Beaver Lake.

PF: It's not where a little building was at one point? I may be thinking of a different spot, then.

PR: No, it's directly across the street from Beaver Lake. Not too far up from the bridge going towards New Bridge.

PF: No, then I'm not familiar with it. Do you remember, in later years then-- Well, it would be the war years, I guess it wouldn't be too much later.

PR: No, I don't remember the war years. I was born in '42, because I'm 74 now.

PF: I just found out recently about a trailer park that was where Steinmart is now, that area. Do you have any recollection of that area?

PR: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. I'll tell you after the interview somebody that has a better memory than I do. He can remember all the businesses and things along Merrimon Avenue.

PF: Okay. What about, as you grew older, as you became a teenager and were let out into the--went further afield, what areas did you go to? Even if it's downtown, that's okay. I mean, it's all connected, it's all part of Asheville history.

PR: I'm trying to stay planted on North Asheville, because I know that's your--

PF: Or other people, stories about, funny things, or happenings in the area? Fires or--

PR: Don't remember any fires. I remember there was a--where the Ingles is on Merrimon Avenue, this would be not right on where Ingles is but certainly close proximity there, there was a restaurant called Chez Paul. And it was just a very elegant restaurant. No elegant that you had to wear a coat and tie, but it was really nice. It wasn't a supper club like the Sky Club was, but it was owned by a man named McKenzie. That was a big deal to go to Chez Paul. And up the street there was a motor court which would just be called a motel now. Pretty much across the street from where the ( ) is, right on the corner is. There was a motel. You know, I cannot remember all the businesses that you went by on they way, say at the end of Beaverdam Road to downtown. I can remember there was a Winn-Dixie, which was on the left as you went towards town. I can remember we get to

get Green Stamps there, that were sort of more like a coupon and you would take them and put them in a book and redeem them for prizes. It took a huge amount of Green Stamps to get a mixer or something like that. You probably remember that.

PF: Yeah, that was clear into the fifties and sixties.

PR: You kind of got me stumped. My memory's not that good. I can remember going to town and there was a wonderful toy store. The toy store there was owned by a man named Mr. Brody. It was called Brody's Toy Store. Loved to go into Mr. Brody's toy store.

PF: Whereabouts downtown?

PR: Mr. Brody's toy store was near Pritchard Park. Kind of across the street where you start down Coxe Avenue. But on the other side. And he had things like these balsa wood models that you could make them ships and airplanes. And I used to like to do that. He just had all the stuff that I would love to have now.

PF: Well, as I recall, you got some later, didn't you?

PR: I did.

PF: You became a toy collector. Maybe that's where you started.

PR: I became a collector of a lot of stuff that--.

PF: That Mr. Brody had, maybe.

PR: Yeah, that Mr. Brody had. I collect things that nobody want to collect. Sorry you didn't get to come to the house today. You would have liked to have seen it. Yeah, there

was a drug store right on the corner of Haywood and Patton Avenue that we used to go to. I don't remember the name of that drug store. When I was older and we would ride the bus up to town from Lee Edwards High School, we would go to Woolworth's and the kids would congregate there and we'd have sodas and a little bit of food, and stuff like that. That was always fun. I don't think we did much as far a going all the way to Biltmore. I think that was too far to go. As far as the neighborhood went, you know, just nice people. Probably not blue-collar workers, mostly white-collar workers. Dad would always buy the cheapest car. Not the cheapest car that was ever made but if he decided he wanted to go get a Chevrolet, and the most expensive Chevrolets were maybe a Bel Air or an Impala, he would come home with a Podunk Chevrolet. And he would go and buy things like Nash Ramblers, which were just terrible cars. And the funny thing was that he was a savvy shopper. And not having the internet, he would go, if he was going to buy a Pontiac, he would go to Pontiac, he'd go to Harry's Pontiac here. And if he didn't like their price, he would go to the Pontiac agency in Hendersonville, then he'd go to Morganton, then he'd go to Hickory, he would go to all the adjoining towns. He would go as far as Charlotte to see what kind of deal he would get on a car. And I guess after everything was said and done, would probably save $300 on the price of a car and spend about $400 on gas and travel to do it. It was a little bit different before we had the internet and we'd actually get out on the street to get things done.

PF: What did your father do for a living?

PR: He had a mortgage company. He had graduated the University of Florida and gotten a law degree. And then the Depression came and nobody wanted lawyers. This was down in Florida. And so he started working for a little loan company there. And then my

mother, who was a Pearlman, met him visiting some relatives in Florida. They got married and he came back here and worked at the furniture store for a while and then he started his own furniture company. I can remember him telling me that he was in Florida, things were so distressed that he could have bought orange groves for $50 an acre. And he said if he'd have done it, it would have been a millionaire, but he said, "I didn't even have $50 an acre to buy things like that." So he was successful and he was happy.

PF: So he had a different furniture store than your grandfather?

PR: No, he went to work at Pearlman's Furniture Store. My mother was a Pearlman, so he went into the store. Just hated it. And he was always having to rescue my grandfather from things. Not shady deals but just things that my grandfather would do that were just so anti-business. He just decided there were other sons that worked at the furniture store and he was just a son-in-law, so I think he just wanted to get away from it.

PF: Did he eventually?

PR: Uh-huh. And then he opened a mortgage company. Yeah, he built the building on Page Avenue, it was just behind the furniture store. In 1941 he built the building there that's now occupied by Kimmel & Associates.

PF: So the building that you've been in that has the furniture name on it.

PR: It's in that building. I practiced law there for probably fifty years, and he was there also. I had a little office and he had a bigger office and we worked together for many years, until he died in '95. So it was always nice being uptown and I could go to lunch. I could get a parking place.

PF: Well, I still tell the story sometimes about when I-- I mean, I knew you peripherally from the antiques business, seeing you around. And your mother was selling some stuff at her home, I guess, which I couldn't tell you where it was, except it was North Asheville.

PR: It was on Marlborough Road, too. It was the house that I grew up in. My dad had died.

PF: And what was the number of that house?

PR: 34.

PF: And you had a separate little table with some jewelry on it and some beautiful Indian jewelry with the turquoise and all. And I love that but I'm short and I just always felt those big pieces made me feel so squatty. And I said to you, "In my next life, I'm going to come back with legs to my shoulders and tall, and I'm going to wear jewelry like that." And you said, very emphatically, "Well, you come and see me then!" And I thought it was so funny.

PR: That just sounds like me.

PF: I know it, and I have told more people that, because it struck me so funny, because it came out like--it came right out there. And that was, I don't know. When would that have been?

PR: That would have been around 1998, because Mother moved to Charlotte about then. Yeah, they had a lovely house. Mother liked nice things and that was when women wore fur coats and stoles that used to have the foxes head on the ends. And she liked nice linens. Nice pillowcases, nice towels. She was certainly quite the lady, or at least, not the

lady that she may have been, but she did like nice things. And my dad was plain as an old shoe. Imagine driving those Podunk Chevrolets.

PF: What other memories come to mind when you think of growing up-- Or not just even growing up, but your early years out and about?

PR: I can remember sneaking the car out of the garage when I was maybe thirteen or fourteen. I had real good memories of going to high school at Lee Edwards. I had a lot of friends. We all had cars back then. We were reckless. We were always having wrecks. That was a fun time. We had a lot of fun going to high school over there.

PF: Where did you go when you would be out just going around?

PR: We would go to Buck's, which was a drive-in restaurant out on Tunnel Road. And we would drive around and around and around. And try and meet girls. There was another drive-in up the street called Wink's. And it wasn't as popular as Buck's was, but the thing I found interesting about Wink's was they had a disc jockey up in a tower. And by tower I don't mean like a tower that a firefighter--not a firefighter but a--whatever those people are that watch for fires. It was maybe twelve feet off the ground with a little room on top of these pillars and you would drive through there and it had a bucket that extended down off the tower on a string. And you would write down a song that you wanted to play for your girlfriend, or she would write down a song she wanted to play for her boyfriend, and you would drop it in the bucket and he would pull the bucket up to the recording area and say this song goes out to such and such. Which is kind of primitive now, but it worked. And across the street was a--not a drive-in but one of those little

restaurants that had the speakers, and it was called Babe Malloy's. Have you heard of that?

PF: Yeah. Just the name.

PR: Yeah, Babe Malloy's. And they served a chipped ham sandwich with cheese on it. And anybody that ever grew up in Asheville will still wax eloquent about "Do you remember the chipped ham sandwiches at Babe Malloy" and we all kind of--.

PF: What kind of cheese?

PR: Probably it was just Velveeta, probably fake cheese. But everybody talks about those chipped ham sandwiches at Babe Malloy's. Other than that, I don't remember anything on Tunnel Road. Not a thing. I remember there was a, I think it was called a Turo-Tel down the street. Other than that, I don't remember anything, I don't think. We just mainly hung around uptown. You know, back then there were clothing stores. The nicest clothing store in town was The Man Store, which was on Patton Avenue. There's a parking lot there now, between Patton Avenue and Church Street. Wonderful man's store. There was a shoe store where the old Wachovia was. Just a lot of clothing stores. And jewelry stores. And little hold-in-the-wall restaurants, hot dog places, stuff like that. Of course, the courthouse was there. City building was there. The monument. None of the businesses that were there then are there now. Up on Pack Square, as you face the Vance Monument, to the left was a whole row of businesses there. And the businesses that I remember were office businesses that you would have seen at the turn of the century, the buildings. I remember there was a fish market there. And it was also run by a many by the name of Mr. McKenzie. It was, I think, the brother of the one that owned Chez Paul.

And Mom would get her fish there and upstairs was the billiard hall and poolroom. Kind of neat. That was an area that we'd all like to go to. To the right was the Plaza Theater, which is where art museum is now. And I can remember we could get a quarter, and we could go see the movie, and we could get a Coke, we could get a box of popcorn--for a quarter. It was a nice theater, very nice. You walked down a ramp. After you paid the money to get your ticket, you walked down a ramp. And then there was this huge lobby there where they sold the drinks and the popcorn. Then you walked down another flight. You'd be at the theater. They had a lot of seats cordoned off on the right and left of the main seats. And then upstairs was a balcony area that was just for Blacks. We didn't think anything about that. And I guess the movies we saw were pretty much Westerns.

PF: You mentioned Blacks. As integration came into the schools, what happened there in the schools?

PR: Well, I was older. So I only went to school with white kids. After I graduated from college, which would have been in 1964, I went to law school at Wake Forest, and there were a couple of Black kids in my class. Then after I got out of law school, I came back to Asheville, and I taught over at the high school where I had graduated. And it was only then that they were starting to integrate. That would have been '67, '68, right at that time, starting to get some of the Black kids at the high school. I don't remember any problems, or anything like that. I do remember when we had a Christmas parade, we all kind of went out to see the kids that went to Stevens Lee. That was the Black high school. That was the one we were separated from. And they would have a marching band. They were so good. They were so good.

PF: I've heard that so often.

PR: They were a parade all by themselves. All the roads were two lane. There was nothing out near where Harry's Pontiac is now. I guess that's Patton Avenue. I don't remember anything out there. There was a driving range, I remember that, that Harry Bloomberg owned.

PF: And what about the area, like where the country club is, and those areas, Grove Park Inn which would have been. Or was that just a hotel to you kids?

PR: That was just a hotel. Where the country club is, Dad introduced me to playing golf when I was probably twelve or thirteen. And I ultimately became a good golfer. At that time, this was long before the country club was there. The country club was over below the Grove Park Inn, at that time. There was a golf course there, which is still there, and it was called Beaver Lake Golf Course. And the clubhouse was right above where you and I start to walk, that parking lot. It's where the library--it's below the library. It's pretty much in the area where the parking lot is, it was a stone building, and quaint.

PF: But on the lake side of the road?

PR: On the lake side.

PF: Okay. I think that's the little building that I alluded to while ago. Because it was still standing when we came in '78, but then they took it down.

PR: Was it a rock building?

PF: Yes. Uh-huh, and small, fairly small.

PR: Yeah. And so I played golf over there every day. And they had an area to the left where all the caddies would hang out, And, of course, they were drinking and gambled, stuff like that. They were kind of a rough crowd. And I used to have Black caddies when I played golf.

PF: Were they mostly Black, the caddies?

PR: Yeah. I'd say it was a fifty-fifty mixed. I don't know how much we paid them, but it wouldn't have been much. Not that we were trying to cheat them, it was just the wage of the day.

PF: Yeah, the going rate.

PR: Yeah. But now everybody rides in a cart. Back then everybody walked and had a caddy. And we would rely on the caddies to tell us where to hit the ball. They knew. And they had a caddymaster, too, who was like the--he was kind of like the, the person that would make sure that the slaves were doing their jobs. His name was Rastus. He was white. Yeah, those were good memories, to play golf. There was a-- Oh, I forgot to tell you this--over on the back left side of Beaver Lake was a swimming pool, and you can still see the steps that went down into the swimming pool. You can still see part of the wall which cordoned off the swimming pool from the rest of Beaver Lake. We would go over there and swim in it. It was wonderful. It had a little snack shop there, a little beach area. And I guess when you walk by there you could probably see the vestiges of what would have been the swimming pool. I remember a kid in my class in the first grade, that would have been about 1948, I guess, that he drowned in the swimming pool. And, after that, they closed it down. And I'm surprised the rest of us didn't die either, because I'm

sure that water was pretty polluted and bad at that time, but I used to love to go to the swimming pool at Beaver Lake.

PF: Good memory.

PR: Not as good as it could be.

PF: What would have made it better?

PR: Youth.

PF: Oh. You mean from this vantage point.

PR: From my vantage point. Youth.

PF: Okay. What school activities did you enjoy the most?

PR: I liked sports. I played a lot of basketball, pickup games. And I enjoyed that. Kind of took a break from the public schools. When I was like in the fifth grade, I went to the school called Gibbons Hall, which was next to St. Genevieve's. Which I don't know if St. Genevieve's is still one or not or whether it's turned into the medical facilities that went down Victoria. I went there and then I went to a school called St. Francis for a year.

PF: Where was that?

PR: That was also on Victoria Road, getting closer to AB Tech. It's where the Smith-McDowell House is now.

PF: Now, was the Jewish Community Center built while you were young?

PR: It was there. It was there. Not in its current location, but close, very close. It was an older building that was there. And I can't remember whether it had a swimming pool. I'm thinking it did. But we didn't--there was no reason to really avail ourselves of anything over there. They had a ballroom, I remember that. They would have parties and things at the ballroom. But I don't have a lot of memories of the Jewish Community Center or certainly if I do, I don't have any fond memories of it. I remember the Manor. They used to have plays in there, at the Manor. Grove Park Inn, I don't remember ever going to the Grove Park Inn, although I'm sure that I did, but I don't have anything that jumps out at me about the Grove Park Inn.

PF: Do you remember any crafts of the period, that kind of thing, or weren't people into them as much as now? We look back on things that we call crafts, that maybe then they just considered not crafts, or not the way that we reckon them now.

PR: I guess you had to have more of an interest in the crafts back then and I don't remember having any interests. Although I kind of beat myself up now because I'd love to have gone back and met people like the Bartons, and some of the bird carvers, that I really like now. I can remember that there was a man named Bascomb Lamar Lunsford. Are you familiar with that name?

PF: Uh-huh.

PR: He was a funny bird. He had a festival at the auditorium every year. And they would bring in buses from the different schools, of kids that would smooth dance and square dance. And it was quite the thing to compete in the dance contests up there. And it happened once a year.

PF: Now, where did he hold them?

PR: Over in the auditorium. And it was the big thing to go to at that time. It's devolved into the Shindig on the Green. People have lost interest in that. But there was a pecking order to Bascomb Lamar Lunsford in that not everybody got to play. He would kind of go out and people were backstage and pick them out of the group there and let them play. And he was a pretty famous man. He was a lawyer. Went around and collected songs from all the mountain people. Always wore a white suit at the dance and folk festival, and wrote some pretty famous songs. That was a great time to go to that. It was a lot of fun. Great music.

PF: Now, that's interesting, too, in your life, that you married a woman that would have been at those at that time. That would have played there.

PR: Exactly. Yeah, I just like that kind of music. It was kind of before bluegrass, it was before mountain music, kind of American roots music. Wonderful music, wonderful musicians back then. They're all gone. All gone. I guess the only one that's left would be probably Arvil Freeman. Anyway, I digress.

PF: No, that's what we want to know about. I don't mind going into other history around. That's still history. Yeah, anything like that that grabbed your interest, that's what we're here for.

PR: That grabbed my interest.

PF: That's interesting, because not everybody from North Asheville would touch on that, so it's interesting. Each one you do, different people bring out things that the others--it

wasn't in their foreground or their interest or maybe just the way they walked to school they were aware of something or that this person wouldn't, or something like that.

PR: We didn't have a lot that held our interest when I was growing up. By that I mean there weren't a lot of things that would entertain us. You know, at basically the turn of the last century, people played music in their house. They sang. We don't sing anymore. And so, you know, before the advent of the phonograph, or movies, entertainment was somebody playing the piano. And while that didn't carry over into my lifetime, our entertainment was pretty simple. The boys loved cars. I loved cars growing up and everybody that had a car, it was souped up, it was a hotrod, and the thing about it then was that each car was unique unto itself. All cars didn't look like the cars today where they were all--looked like they were same manufacturer but they just got different tail lights. The cars then were unique and everybody--boys wanted a Ford or a Mercury or a Chevrolet. We would have drag races on Country Club Road, right as you turn from Kimberly onto Country Club Road, that long stretch that goes along the golf course. We'd have drag races along there. And there was still enough cars left over from the thirties. We liked those cars. And we would take those cars and turn them into hotrods. There were still Model A Fords around, early Chevrolets. They had a staying power back then.

PF: Did you know a John Young that grew up in North Asheville? I think more on Windsor.

PR: I think I did.

PF: He was the grandfather of--on the other side of two of our grandsons.

PR: Yeah, I knew John Young.

PF: Brother of Ralph Young.

PR: I think he died.

PF: He did. About eight years ago.

PR: Yeah, he had a terrible kind of cancer.

PF: Yes, he did. Wonderful person. I loved him.

PR: Yeah, he really liked cars. I did know him.

PF: He was all in that early stuff and still had several Pontiacs when he died.

PR: Yeah, he did. I knew him well. I just had to plug it in to my memory. I liked him a lot. But we did like cars. And the girls, I think they just liked boys.

PF: Now, that's one thing that hasn't changed.

PR: I think that's about all we had to do was mess around with cars or go to the movie. Of course, we used to have a girl and we'd park and do a little hugging and kissing. God, that was fun.

[Laughing.]

PF: You're not going to name names?

PR: No, I just hope they don't name names. I wish I could give you more information, particularly about North Asheville. It's not a fog. It's just that it wasn't that exciting or stimulating. It was kind of a simpler life. Where did you grow up?

PF: Southern California. Which has changed a lot.

PR: I'll bet. Asheville was slow to change. Although now it's changed at such a rapid pace, everything's turned into a hotel.

PF: I've been glad I was here at the before, during and after, to see what it was like. When we came it was late seventies and Asheville was already dead downtown.

PR: Yeah, there was a long period of time and my dad was so interested in revitalizing downtown Asheville. He'd go to meetings of the downtown revitalization committee and he was so frustrated that all the buildings were boarded up and that there was no business there. It was a ghost town. Now, it's just so busy, but it's all restaurants and hotels. What was once fun to go downtown, I won't even go downtown anymore. I don't like it. But I guess if you're a tourist it's okay.

PF: Do your interests now stay pretty much in North Asheville? In the new North Asheville?

PF: Yeah. I think I've got a little agoraphobia. If it was up to me, I'd just mess around in the house. I spend a lot of time at the library and walk around the lake a lot, but I can do that only so much. Oh, I know what else I'll tell you. There was--all the car lots were down on Coxe Avenue. When you're sixteen years old, you love to go look at cars and my dad, who doted on me, and would pretty much buy me whatever I wanted-- I mean, I didn't turn into Little Lord Fauntleroy, but he would buy me cars that I wanted and they were just terrible cars. They were awful cars. I'd look them because I thought they were handsome, and then I would have them for an hour and I'd drop the transmission out of

them or they wouldn't start. There were a couple of guys down there that sold cars. One of them was a guy named Bob Ledford. Have you heard of him?

PF: No.

PR: Bob Ledford was the world's best showman. He would get on the radio and television and talk about coming down to Bob Ledford's to buy a car and he had all these kind of cars that interest boys. I think there was another guy named Claude Taylor who had a car lot. But Bob Taylor [sic] would always say when he was talking about a car and he was trying to kind of wax eloquent about it, he would always say, "It's a real village cut-up." None of us knew what that meant. We all know it now. We don't know what it means now, but we laugh about it when we hear someone else say "It's a real village cut-up." I don't know what that meant.

PF: Did the showrooms have grand openings each year when the new models came out?

PR: They did. I'm glad you asked me that. They would keep the cars covered up so you couldn't see them.

PF: Yes.

PR: And that was the big deal for the fathers and the sons to go down to the Chevrolet and the Ford agency to see the cars.

PF: Yeah, whether you were going to buy them or not.

PR: But to see them unveil the cars was just the most fun you could possibly have. And the thing about it was, was the cars were so terrible. They were such bad cars. If we

would go to Florida, Mom and Dad and I would go to Florida, I mean, we would breathe a sigh of relief that we made it down there without the car breaking down. It always broke down. And, of course, there were all these shade tree mechanics that could fix them because they didn't have computers in them. Everybody could fix cars. I couldn't. Yeah, that was fun to go down there. That was called Parkland Chevrolet. That's where office buildings are now. And then I think the Ford agency was called Matthews Ford, which I think was probably here when you were here.

PF: Yeah. It was.

PR: Yeah, we liked our cars back then. You've got me reminiscing and I'm getting a little teary-eyed.

PF: The good old days, huh?

PR: Yeah, the good old days.

PF: Yeah, even in LA they had those showrooms. I'd go with my father. I had no interest in cars but I loved the going part, you know, the excitement of it. And that would be like that, the showrooms, and we'd go to different ones. After the war, they had those big spotlights, you know, that swooped across the sky.

PR: I do. Yeah.

PF: And they used them then at the--some nights there might be five or six of those going, after the war, and we'd try to follow to them.

PR: Where would they lead to?

PF: Well, they'd lead you to--you'd get to the source, you'd be at a showroom like that or some opening. They used them for like grand openings. I mean, at time went on, it could be like a grocery store or something and we quit going. We kind of lost interest because it took us places we didn't want to go, you know. But at the time when the car dealers, I think they were among the first, you know, to get them to lead you to the car places.

PR: They used to do those at those Hollywood openings.

PF: Oh, yes, they had a lot of those. I don't think they do that anymore, because it throws off the airplanes and stuff. But, yeah, during the war they used them for other things, spotting the sky, looking for planes.

PR: Those were funny times. I can remember things like cap guns so well. And we could always see a serial at the end of the movie. Did you remember those?

PF: Oh, yeah. And then you could stay in the movie all day long on that same quarter. It must have been a boon for parents.

PR: But the serial, the hero was always in car maybe going over a cliff or something. You had to come back and make sure he didn't die the next week. And there were a ton of cowboy stars back then. It's so funny. And then people had their favorites. You know, if you liked Roy Rogers you didn't like Gene Autry. If you liked Zorro you didn't like the Cisco Kid. Red Ryder. And they all had sidekicks. They had a lot of Westerns. And, a lot of musicals. And I'm sure you remember those. There were a lot of musicals. Which I couldn't sit through a musical now.

PF: And I didn't care for them at the time. I was following the story and to me they interrupted the story, which was always romantic, of course. But they danced down the middle of the street and I guess I was too much a realist. If somebody did that, you'd think they were nuts.

PR: Yeah, a lot of musicals I do remember that. And 3-D? Do you remember that?

PF: Oh, yeah, the special glasses.

PR: I used to love those things. You'd come out with a migraine headache. Yeah, those were fun. And horror movies. There were a lot of horror movies. I can remember a movie called And Man Created Woman, with Bridget Bardot, and it was the first time we saw a bare bottom. We were just kind of taken by that. We found that very interesting. Things were kind of simple.

PF: Until you got to that point.

PR: Yeah, until you got to that point. I think there was just a simplicity about life back then.

PF: It wasn't right in your face.

PR: Right. Right. It wasn't complicated. I was talking to my son the other day and we were talking about reading. He said, "Are you reading any good books?" And I said, "No." I have a good book at home, but I've only read about ten pages of it. And I said, "I've sort of lost my interest in reading." He said, "You know why that is," and he said, "because we're moving at such a fast pace that all that information is right at our fingertips and we can get everything we want to know right off the internet." We got this

thing at home at Christmas, it's called a Google something. And we've got another one in the bedroom that's an Echo. It's a little device much like your tape recorder, that you can just ask it questions and it tells you the answer. This was great. You get up in the morning, ask it what time it is, the weather outside.

PF: What you should wear today?

PR: Well, it won't give you anything where it has to think. It won't give you a solution. It will give you two and two is four, but if you say what year was something maybe started, it can't do that. Or maybe it can and just doesn't want to tell me. I don't know.

PF: Well, I think we're going to close this. It has been interesting and if you think of something else, don't hesitate to let me know. We can always add, you know, they want all the information they can get. It will be archived.

PR: Yeah, I don't know how much information I gave them.

PF: Well, it all hooks up.

END OF INTERVIEW.